

# Mapline

*A quarterly newsletter published by  
The Hermon Dunlap Smith Center for the History of Cartography at  
The Newberry Library*

**Number 68**      **Winter 1992-93**

# Did Ptolemy Mistake His Taprobane for Peninsular South India?



Figure 1. "Duodecima Asiae tabula," from Claudius Ptolemy, *Cosmographia* (Ulm, 1482). Courtesy of the Edward E. Ayer Collection, the Newberry Library.

Imputing errors and ignorance to Ptolemy for his geographical vagaries is a common academic pastime, and the scholarship concerning the identity of Ptolemy's "Taprobane" is no exception. Criticizing the second-century Alexandrian for foreshortening India in his *Geographia*, Crone writes: "Ptolemy greatly overestimated the size of Taprobana (Ceylon) and overlooked the peninsular form of the Indian sub-continent or perhaps confused it with Ceylon."<sup>1</sup> Bartlett quotes Crone casually and says: "A glance at the present-day map shows how easy it would have been to confuse island and mainland. The close-linked chain of islands between the two, called Adam's Bridge, could have led to erroneous descriptions of a continuous coastline."<sup>2</sup> This astonishing explanation is more boldly phrased by Gole: "Taprobana with Comari Insula off the south-east was in fact the peninsula of South India, mistakenly divided from the mainland."<sup>3</sup> None of these writers, who are so anxious to impute these mistakes to Ptolemy, have shown how he confused Taprobane with India or how the "close-linked chain of islands" misled him. Moreover, neither Crone nor Gole have attempted to identify the place names of Taprobane and show that they belong to South India. Consequently, their assertions deserve serious examination; I present here evidence to the contrary, that Ptolemy's "Taprobane" was in fact not South India, but Sri Lanka.

"Asiae XII," the final regional map in Ptolemy's *Geographia*, depicts an Indian Ocean island of nearly continental size situated athwart the equator that he named "Taprobane." Since the Renaissance, Western geographers and historians, including such prominent figures as Fracastoro, Ramusio, and João

De Barros, waged heated debates over Taprobane's identification with countries ranging from Madagascar to Sumatra. Philological researches supported by archaeological finds have conclusively established that the Greek "Taprobane" is nothing other than the Sinhalese "Tambapanni." Yet recent debates, based on false premises and old errors, have introduced other elements of confusion, as we have seen above. Where does this name come from?

In the early Greek texts, it is Onesicritus, Alexander the Great's companion in the Indian expedition (325-324 B.C.), who evokes the name of "Taprobane" for the first time. The name was adopted by the ambassadors of the Seleucid successors to Alexander, Megasthenēs (302-291 B.C.) and Dēimachos a little afterwards, who resided at Pataliputra (Patna) on the Gangetic plain. For a long time, the name continued to designate an island in Greek geographical works (e.g., Strabo XV.1.15). Therefore, we naturally search for the name's origin among the northern Indians, informants of the Greeks. In the aftermath of the Seleucidan ambassadors' residence at Pataliputra, "Tambapanni" appears in the rock inscriptions of Asoka (Emperor of India, ca.274-32 B.C.). Four of the *Second Rock Edicts* and three of the *Thirteenth Rock Edicts* of Asoka mention "Tambapanni" along with the variants "Tambapamni" and "Tambapani," designating an adjacent country toward the south of his empire.<sup>4</sup> These names seem to be the source of the Greek "Taprobane," but to what country do they refer?

The fifth-century historical works of Sri Lanka, particularly the *Mahavamsa* [*The Great Chronicle*] (chap. 7) and the *Dipavamsa* [*The Chronicle of the Island*] (chap. 9), illuminate this question. From the *Dipavamsa*, for example, we learn that "Tambapanni" was the name given to the island by the early Aryan settlers, migrants from Northern India:

They came to Lañkādipa, where they disembarked and went on shore. Standing on dry ground, being exhausted by great hunger, thirst and fatigue, they were unable (?) to walk on foot. They crawled about on the ground with hands and knees; afterwards, when they rose and stood upright, they saw that their hands were resplendent (copper-colored). The red-colored dust of the ground covered their arms and hands; hence the name of that place was called Tambapanni (copper-palmed). Tambapanni was the first town in the most excellent Lañkādipa [Island of Lañka].<sup>5</sup>

The Hermon Dunlap Smith Center for the History of Cartography was founded in 1972 at The Newberry Library to promote the study of the history of cartography through research projects, fellowships, courses of instruction, and publications. Further information about the Center is available on request from the Director, David Buisseret.

*Mapline* is published four times a year by the Hermon Dunlap Smith Center for the History of Cartography. Annual subscription is \$8.00 for U.S. and North America; \$10.00 elsewhere. Back issues (as available) \$2.00 each. Please address all correspondence to James R. Akerman, Editor, *Mapline*, The Newberry Library, 60 West Walton St., Chicago, IL 60610. ISSN 0196-0881

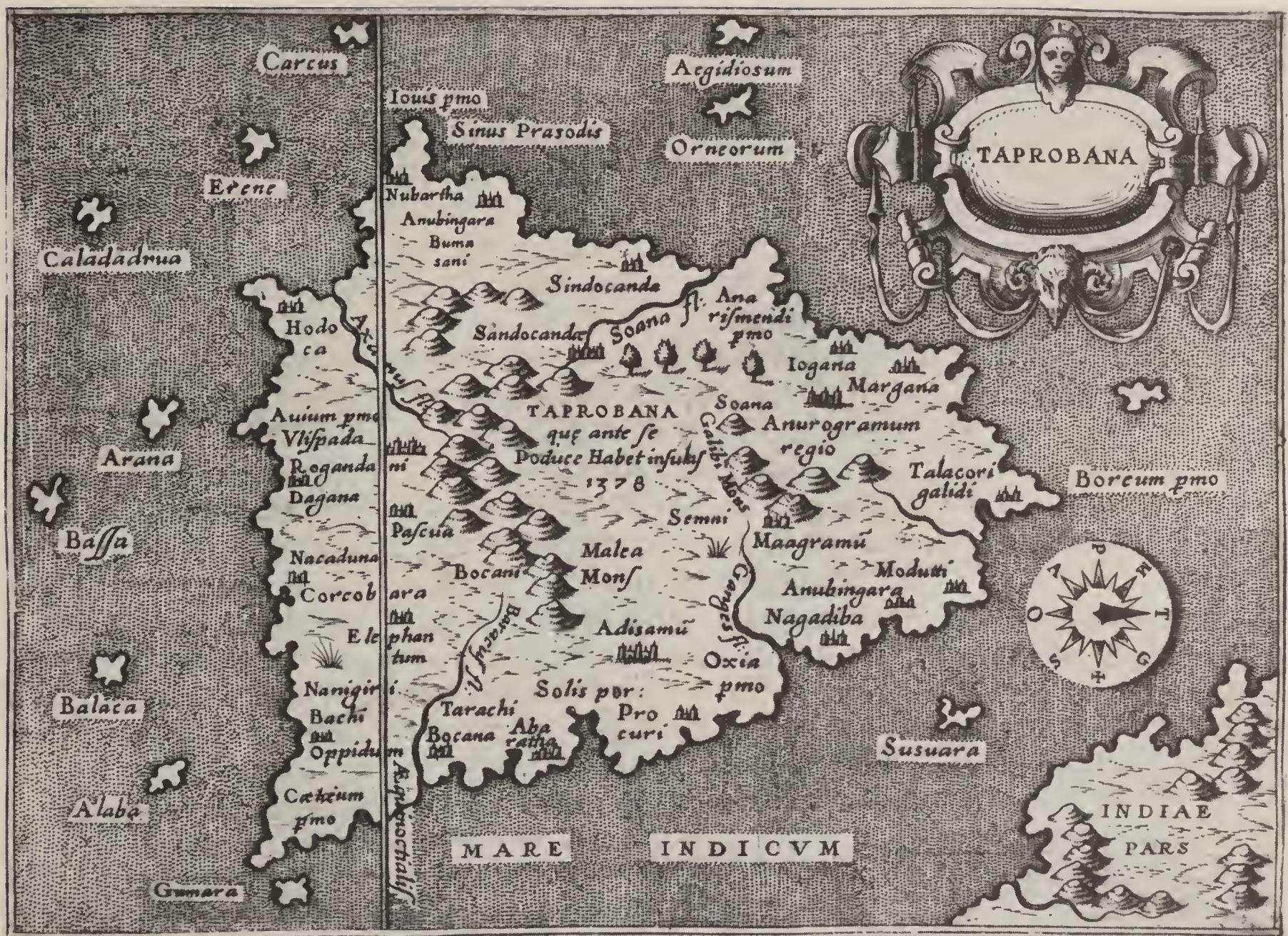


Figure 2. Tommaso Porcacchi, "Taprobana," from *L'Isole piu famose del mondo* (Venice, 1572), p. 186. Courtesy of the Edward E. Ayer Collection, the Newberry Library.

In his textual description of Taprobane, Porcacchi brought together a variety of information bearing upon three different islands: Sri Lanka, Sumatra, and a fabulous place supposedly visited by a certain Iambulus and mentioned in the *Bibliotheki* by Diodorus Siculus of the first century B.C. Porcacchi's book, however, has maps both of Sumatra and Taprobane, neither of which suggest any confusion the one with the other.

The toponym "Tambapanni" is from Pali, the language used by Buddhist monks to redact these chronicles. Pali is related to the Prakrit language, which derived from Sanskrit and was used in the Asoka rock inscriptions. It seems likely that this name referred to the island's red-colored, lateritic soil.

The most crucial clue in the *Geographia* itself that distinguishes the island from the adjacent subconti-

nent is found at the beginning of chapter VII.4.1. There Ptolemy clearly states that "[o]pposite the Cape Kôry, which is in India, is the projecting point of the island of Taprobane." This is the precise location of the presently submerged isthmus, which once connected the island to India and is now an island chain. Ptolemy's identification of this promontory contributes much to his credibility in this area. This "Cape Kôry" has definitely been identified with the Sanskrit word *koti*, meaning end, tip, or corner, found in the toponym "Dhanuskodi" ( $9^{\circ}14'N$ ,  $79^{\circ}3'E$ ), or "the Tip of the Bow." This is a reference to the bow of Prince Rama, who, in the Sanskrit epic *Ramayana* is said to have crossed this isthmus (by constructing a stone bridge) to invade Lanka and deliver his beloved Sita.

It is impossible to give here an in-depth study of place names of Taprobane, and I refer the reader to the numerous works by both Sri Lankan and foreign

scholars.<sup>6</sup> However, I have chosen four names from each cardinal direction to further demonstrate that Ptolemy knew well the insular character of Taprobane. These are as follows: "Nagadiba" = Nagadipa in the North; "Rhogandanoi" = the inhabitants of Ruhuna in the South; "Sindokanda," lit. "Horse Mountain" in Old Sinhalese, on the western coast (cf. "Hippuros," the name of the port in Taprobane, mentioned by Pliny, N.H. VI.84); and "Bokana" = Gokanna (present day Trincomalee) on the eastern coast. These names are entirely unrelated to South India and are distinctly shown on the Ptolemaic map of Taprobane. Moreover, other place names that are obviously South Indian are shown on the Ptolemaic map of India, "Asiae X."

Ptolemy's *Geographia* fell into oblivion in the West, only to be revived after the fall of the Byzantine Empire in the fifteenth century when it became available to European scholars through a

Figure 3. Giacomo Gastaldi, "Sumatra," in G. B. Ramusio, *Navigationi et Viaggi* (Venice, 1556), vol. 3, p. 434. Reproduced from A. E. Nordenskiöld, *Periplus* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1967), pl. 73.

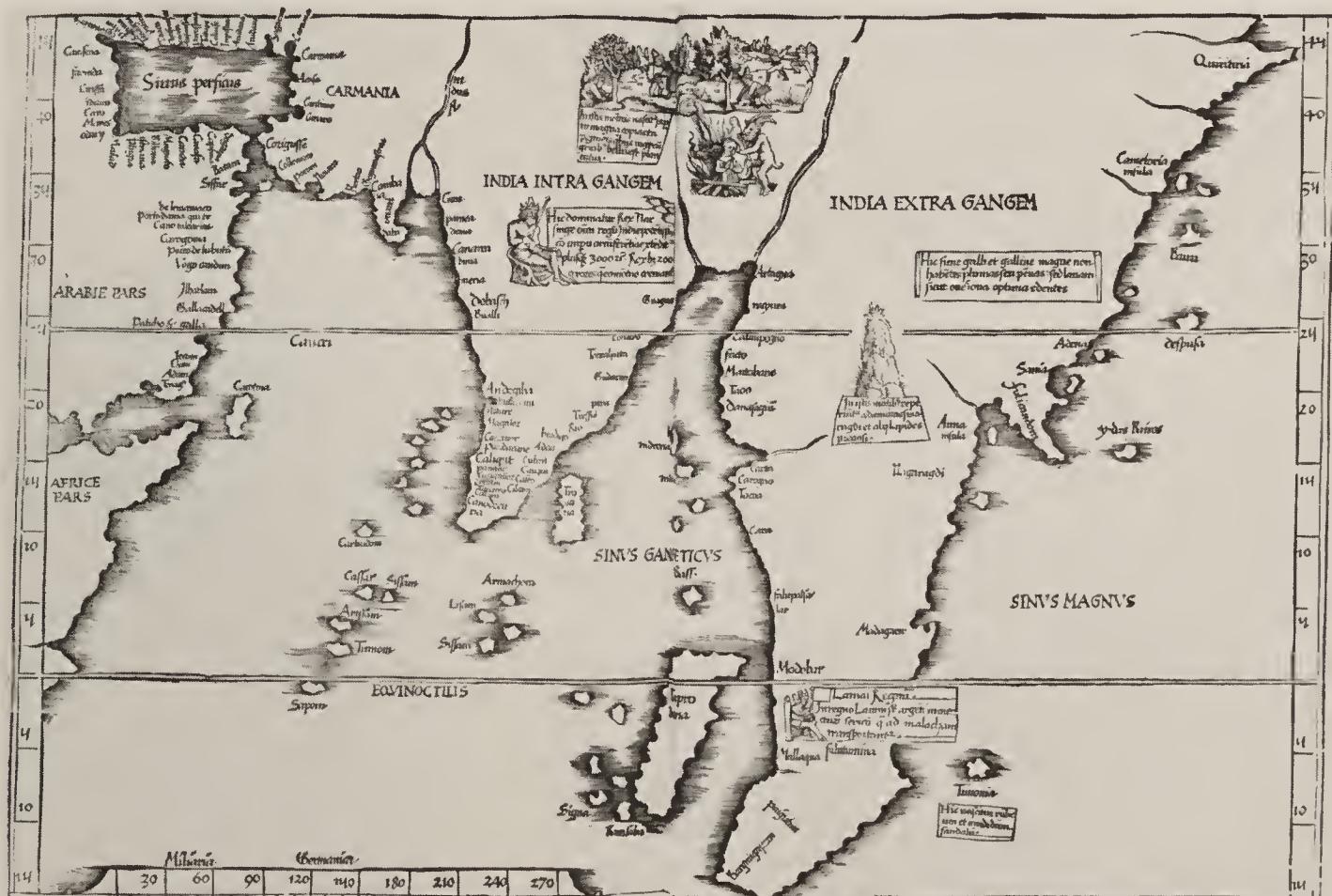
number of editions. In this way, the ancient name "Taprobane" was also revived, but it now had to compete with another, newer name, "Saylam." An island called "Saylam" was known to the West as early as the thirteenth century, through the travel account of Marco Polo. This name also appeared in Italian maps of the fourteenth century, but it was only after Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope in 1497 that its shape was more or less accurately revealed and its identity with ancient Taprobane established. Its existence was so intriguing to the Portuguese that when Don Francisco de Almeida set sail for the east in 1505, he was under express instructions from King Emmanuel to discover it.

Apparently, the map makers of Europe did not understand that the "Saylam" or "Seyllan" of their time was merely another name for island Ptolemy called "Taprobane" twelve centuries earlier. Fra Mauro, who complained that "Ptolemy professing to describe Taprobana, has really only described Saylam," had "Siumetra or Taprobana" prominently featured in his world map of 1459. The great esteem





Figures 4-5. Laurent Fries supplemented his Strasbourg, 1522 edition of Ptolemy's *Geographia* with two "tabulae modernae" relating to South and Southeast Asia. In the map above Fries depicts a peninsular India attended by the satellite island "Seylam," which occupies the place of Sumatra in the Indonesian Archipelago. Below, to make amends for a virtually non-existent Peninsular India in Ptolemy's "Asiae X," a second map by Fries shows a tapered India with an island called "Tragana." "Tragana" is a corruption of Trincomalee, a city on the eastern coast of Sri Lanka. Courtesy of the Edward E. Ayer Collection, the Newberry Library.



in which Ptolemy was held on matters of geography and cartography was such that travellers and map makers, believing in its existence, were now looking for an obsolete Taprobane, a name that was long lost. When Sumatra was visited in the early part of the fifteenth century by Nicolo Conti, we are told (by Pope Eugenius IV's secretary, Poggio) that "he went to a fine city of the island of Taprobana, which island is called by the natives Sciamuthera."<sup>7</sup> Out of respect for Ptolemy, sixteenth-century cartographers located Taprobane in its traditional position off a dwarfed South Indian coastline, or in some instances transferred the name "Taprobane" to Sumatra--which is, it will be noted, athwart the equator--and placed Saylam/Seyllan somewhere in the vicinity. Sometimes, a second Indian peninsula was added, attended by a "Taprobane" at its tip, ignorantly making two islands out of one, or even three, as in the case of the Contarini-Roselli world map of 1506.

Lloyd Brown wrote that the "legendary island of Taprobane was not improved by Ptolemy."<sup>8</sup> But it is curious that he should have overlooked the orientation the *Periplus* (chap. 61), which he cites in the same paragraph, gave to the island barely a century before Ptolemy, stretching it across the Indian Ocean towards the West till it nearly reaches the eastern coast of Africa. It was Ptolemy who decidedly set the trend for a more precise cartographic image of the island which later matured into the modern map of Sri Lanka. Though he greatly exaggerated its size, for thirteen centuries afterwards there were no maps that could rival the accuracy and detail of the geographic and toponymic features identified by Ptolemy in his map of Taprobane.

#### Notes

1. Gerald R. Crone, *Maps and Their Makers* (Folkestone, Kent: Dawson, 1978), 23.
2. Alan Bartlett, "Ceylon: A Collector's Pearl," *The Map Collector* 38 (March 1987): 17.
3. Susan Gole, "India Proper," *The Map Collector* 20 (Sept. 1982): 16.
4. E. Hultzsch, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, vol. 1: *Inscriptions of Asoka* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1925), 2-4, 28-29, 46-47, 51-52, 66-68, 72, 81-83.
5. *The Dipavmsa: An Ancient Buddhist Historical Record*, trans. Hermann Oldenberg (London: Williams and Norgate, 1879), IX, 28-37, p. 161-62.

6. For example, C. W. Nicholas, "Ptolemy's Island of Taprobane," *Bulletin of the Ceylon Geographical Society*, March-June 1950: 93-96; D. P. M. Weerakkody, "Some Observation on Ptolemy's Description of Sri Lanka," *Kalyani*, 1, 1-2 (October 1982): 31-47; André Berthelot, *L'Asie ancienne centrale et sud-orientale d'après Ptolémée* (Paris: Payot, 1930): 357-71.

7. "The Travels of Nicolò Conti, in the East," in *India in the Fifteenth Century: Being a Collection of Narratives of Voyages to India*, trans. R. H. Major (London: Hakluyt Society, 1857), 8.

8. Lloyd A. Brown, *The Story of Maps* (New York: Dover, 1979), p. 77.

Ananda Abeydeera  
Smith Center Short-Term Fellow  
from Colombo, Sri Lanka and based in Paris

## Smith Center Announcements

### New Publications

The Center and the University of Chicago Press are pleased to announce the publication of *Monarchs, Ministers, and Maps: The Emergence of Cartography as a Tool of Government in Early Modern Europe*, the sixth book arising from the Kenneth Nebenzahl, Jr., Lectures in the History of Cartography. Edited by David Buisseret, *Monarchs, Ministers, and Maps* is based on lectures presented at

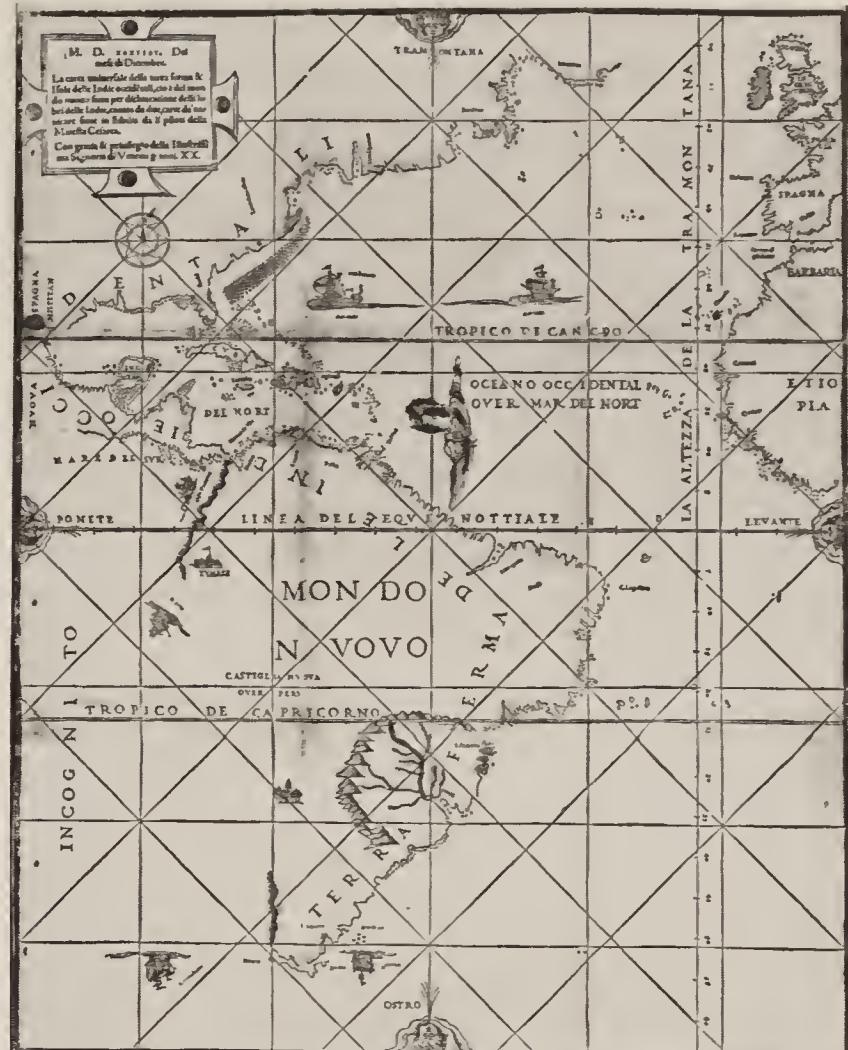


the Eighth Nebenzahl lecture series held in 1985. John Marino, Peter Barber, David Buisseret, Geoffrey Parker, James Vann, and Michael J. Mikos have contributed the book's seven essays. Each essay concerns a different geographical and temporal context from Renaissance Italy to eighteenth-century Poland, so that the entire work provides a broad portrait of state mapping and map use in Europe from 1400 to 1700. *Monarchs, Ministers, and Maps* is 189 pages in length and is illustrated by more than 80 color and monochrome plates. It may be ordered for \$45.00 (plus shipping, handling, and sales taxes, where applicable) from the Newberry Library bookstore or the University of Chicago Press, 11030 S. Langley Avenue, Chicago, IL 60628.

The Smith Center has just released its sixth occasional publication entitled, *The "Ramusio" Map of 1534: A Facsimile Edition*, with commentary by Arthur Holzheimer and David Buisseret. The map in question is an extremely rare woodblock-printed map of the Atlantic Ocean that was published to accompany the *Summario de la Generale Historia de l'Indie Occidentali...* (Venice, 1534), attributed to Giovanni Battista Ramusio, a publisher of many early accounts of European exploration. The map itself provides a very fine summary of Iberian knowledge of the Americas to 1534, especially the West Indies and the Caribbean. The identity of the cartographer remains uncertain, but in the course of comparisons with other maps of the period (several of which are illustrated) links to the most recent Spanish cartography are established. The monograph of 33 pages includes a bibliography, 9 black-and-white plates, and of course a full-color facsimile (9x7", reduced from the original 21x17"). The "Ramusio" Map of 1534 may be ordered from the Smith Center or the Newberry Library bookstore for \$10 plus \$1.50 per order for postage/handling.

## Our Volunteers

This has been the most productive year in recent memory for cartographic volunteers at the library, with three volunteers in regular attendance pursuing research and bibliographic projects of great value to library patrons. Arthur Holzheimer has spent much of his time researching and helping in the preparation of our sixth occasional publication (see above), featuring his copy of the 1534 Ramusio map of the Atlantic Ocean.



Roger Baskes has been patiently reading our bookstacks for more than a year to in order to make a comprehensive list of the library's atlas holdings. Roger has already made a full listing on his PC of the atlases in the Rand McNally Collection, and has gamely moved on to the less consolidated holdings scattered throughout the Newberry's various special collections and catalogue schedules. Printed versions of the Rand McNally list and a partial, interim list of the gamut of our atlas holdings list are now available to Map Room patrons. We hope eventually to publish the completed list.

For several years now Peggy Haffner has been grappling with the thankless task of cataloguing the Map Room's extensive file of cartographic offprints. This file consists of articles, clippings, pamphlets, brief monographs, and unpublished papers which Map Room and Smith Center staff have acquired over the years from sometimes obscure sources. Most of this material is not available elsewhere in the library and would not otherwise receive cataloguing attention. The file has been organized alphabetically (by author) for many years, but without proper subject indexing Peggy is now undertaking, its usefulness to our map patrons is limited.

## Fifteenth International Conference on the History of Cartography Chicago, 21-25 June 1993

The academic and social programs of the 15th International Conference on the History of Cartography are now nearly set. The conference will be held over five days, Monday-Friday 21-25 June 1993. Over 70 papers and poster presentations concerned with the history of commercial cartography, cartography and religion, cartography and statecraft, cartography and aesthetics, and the European and Indigenous mapping of the Americas have been accepted from persons from seventeen countries.

Accompanying exhibitions of cartographic treasures of the Newberry Library and of Native American mapping are being planned by the Newberry Library's cartographic staff; the Adler Planetarium of Chicago is organizing an exhibit of its celestial cartography and navigational instruments; and the University Library, the University of Illinois-Chicago will exhibit some of its maps and documents relating to Daniel Burnham's turn-of-the century plan for Chicago. The conference program includes optional tours of Chicago historic sites and architecture and to the American Geographical Society Collection at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

The International Cartographic Association is organizing a panel on the teaching of the history of cartography to convene during the conference, and conference attenders are encouraged to remain in Chicago an extra day in order to attend the Eleventh Kenneth Nebenzahl, Jr., Lectures in the History of Cartography (see below). A meeting of the International Society of Curators of Early Maps will precede the conference on Sunday 20 June 1993. Map curators *only* are requested to contact Edward Dahl, Early Cartography Specialist, National Archives of Canada, Historical Resources Branch, 395 Wellington Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1A ON3 Canada, for further information on this pre-conference meeting.

A complete program for the conference and a registration form may be had from James Akerman at the Smith Center.

## The Eleventh Kenneth Nebenzahl, Jr., Lectures in the History of Cartography

"Cartographic Encounters: Studies in Native American Mapping," the Eleventh Kenneth Nebenzahl, Jr., Lectures, will be held on Friday and Saturday, 25 and 26 June 1993, immediately following the Fifteenth International Conference on the History of Cartography. The series has been organized with the assistance of the principal speaker, Professor Malcolm Lewis (Sheffield University, England). He will be assisted by Dr. Elizabeth Boone (Dumbarton Oaks), Dr. Patricia Galloway (Mississippi Department of Archives and History) and Professor Peter Nabokov (University of Wisconsin-Madison). Dr. Lewis's introductory lecture will begin at 8:00 p.m. Friday in the Newberry's East Hall, and will be followed by a reception in the library's lobby. Saturday's program will include four lectures, two each in the morning and afternoon. The Lectures will be accompanied by an exhibit exploring the variety of Native American cartography in pre- and post-Columbian North and Meso-America. The exhibit curator is Mark Warhus, who was curator and organizer of the highly successful travelling exhibition, "Maps and the Columbian Encounter."

As usual the lectures are free and open to the public, but due to the unusually large attendance expected this year persons wishing to hear the lectures are requested to reserve their seats by writing the Center or calling Jim Akerman or Tom Willcockson at (312) 943-9090, ext. 472 and 474.

## Smith Center Fellows

Our recent long-term fellow, Tom Conley (University of Minnesota), reports that his visit to the Newberry helped him complete several recent publications: "Punitio et graphie," in *Michel Foucault: Lire l'oeuvre*, ed. Luce Girard (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1992), pp. 189-94; "Du mot à la carte: Verbal Cartographies of Gargantua (Ch. 33)," in *Writing the Renaissance: Essays on Sixteenth Century French Literature in Honor of Floyd Gray*, ed. R.C. La Charité (Lexington: French Forum, 1992), pp. 29-42; "Montaigne en montage: Mapping 'De la vanité' (III, ix)," *Montaigne Studies* 3 (1991): 1-23; and "Signatures de perspective," *Hors cadre* 10 (Spring 1992): 217-28.

# Briefly Noted

## Conferences and Exhibitions

From 26 February to 8 April 1993, the **Gemeentearchief Amsterdam** [Municipal Archives of Amsterdam] will mount an exhibition entitled *Vier Eeuwen Amsterdamsche Buurten uin Kaart* [Four Centuries of District Maps of Amsterdam]. Throughout the exhibit, curator Marc Hameleers asks the question "Which large scale maps are useful when doing historical research on the city of Amsterdam?" He has selected a large variety of maps from the Archives to answer these questions including estate atlases, cadastral maps, and topographic maps. An entrance fee of f3.50 will be charged. Over the next few years the Archive intends to make all the exhibited maps available to the public in 35 mm. microfiche format. For further information contact Mr. Hameleers or press officer André Hirs at Gemeentearchief Amsterdam, Amsteldijk 67, 1074 HZ Amsterdam, The Netherlands (phone +31 (0)20-6646916, fax +31 (0)20-6750596).

The public displays at the **Old Royal Observatory, Greenwich**, scheduled to reopen on 24 March, will include *Time and Space: John Harrison and the Search for Longitude*, a new exhibition sponsored by *The Economist* in honor of that publication's 150th anniversary.

## New Journals

*Cartographica Hungarica*, to be published twice a year by T. Szathmary, is now available. The journal will be published in Hungarian, but summaries of each article will be provided in English, French, German, and Italian. For information write *Cartographica Hungarica*, 61015 Nova Feltria, Posta C.P. 28, Italy.

*Charta*, an Italian magazine for collectors and enthusiasts of all types of paper products, began publication last September. For information write *Charta*, Segretaria di redazione, Giudecca 671, 30123 Venice, Italy.

## Fellowships and Awards

Fund-raising for the J.B. Harley Research Fellowships in the History of Cartography is reported to be making good progress. Once established, these fellowships will help support scholars wishing to do research in the history of cartography in the London region. The fund already has attracted £6000, with a further £2000 promised. So far there have been 80 donors, of whom seven are Sponsors, each subscribing £500 or more. This encouraging start means it should be possible to award the first fellowship for 1994. An explanatory leaflet will be issued in the first half of 1993, setting out the procedure for applicants. The J.B. Harley Research Fellowships in the History of Cartography will be open to any who are pursuing advanced research, whatever their nationality, discipline or profession. The size and number of future awards depend on further donations. The eventual target of £40,000 is intended to finance up to three fellowships per year, each of one month. Donations to the Harley Fellowships can be made to Tony Campbell, Honorable Secretary, The J.B. Harley Research Fellowships in History of Cartography, the Map Room, The British Library, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3DG, England, UK.

The Washington Map Society has established a Cartographic Research Grant Committee chaired by the society's past president, Jim Flatness. This past summer, the committee's first grant recommendation was approved by the society's Board of Directors and funded by outside sources. The endorsed project was proposed by Gary Fitzpatrick, and is to be a three-phase, eighteen-month investigation of the use of personal computers in historical cartographic research, particularly in relation to the mapping of the Hawaii and the Pacific. The first phase will examine the use of graphics packages in studying different editions of the same printed map. Phase Two will look into the conversion of coastlines on historic maps into files of coordinates and their remapping onto different projections. In the final phase Mr. Fitzpatrick will attempt to recreate profiles of the parts of the coastline of Hawaii as seen from the decks of the ships of the La Perouse expedition.

The Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation has made an award to Susan Gole to help support the preparation of her cartobibliography *Maps for the Historian: Maps of the Eastern Mediterranean Published*

in *British Parliamentary Papers, 1801-1921*. The book is scheduled to be published by the Cultural Foundation in 1994.

## New Professional Society

The first meeting of the Centro Italiano per gli studi storico-geografici was held last October 6 in Florence. The new society devoted to the promotion of research in the history of geography, cartography, and exploration currently numbers about 100 members. Luzzana Caraci has been elected first president.

## Map Talk

...When she came out, she walked back across the square into the Calea Victoriei and, passing through the parrot-land of the gypsy flower-sellers, reached the British Propaganda Bureau. No one was looking at the pictures of British cruisers that curled and yellowed in the sun, but there was a crowd round the German Bureau opposite. Curiosity propelled her across the road.

The window was filled with a map of Scandinavia. Arrows, three inches wide, cut from

red cardboard, pointed the direction of the German attack. In the crowd no one spoke. People stood awed by the arrogant swagger of the display. Harriet, trying to look indifferent to it, made for the University building....

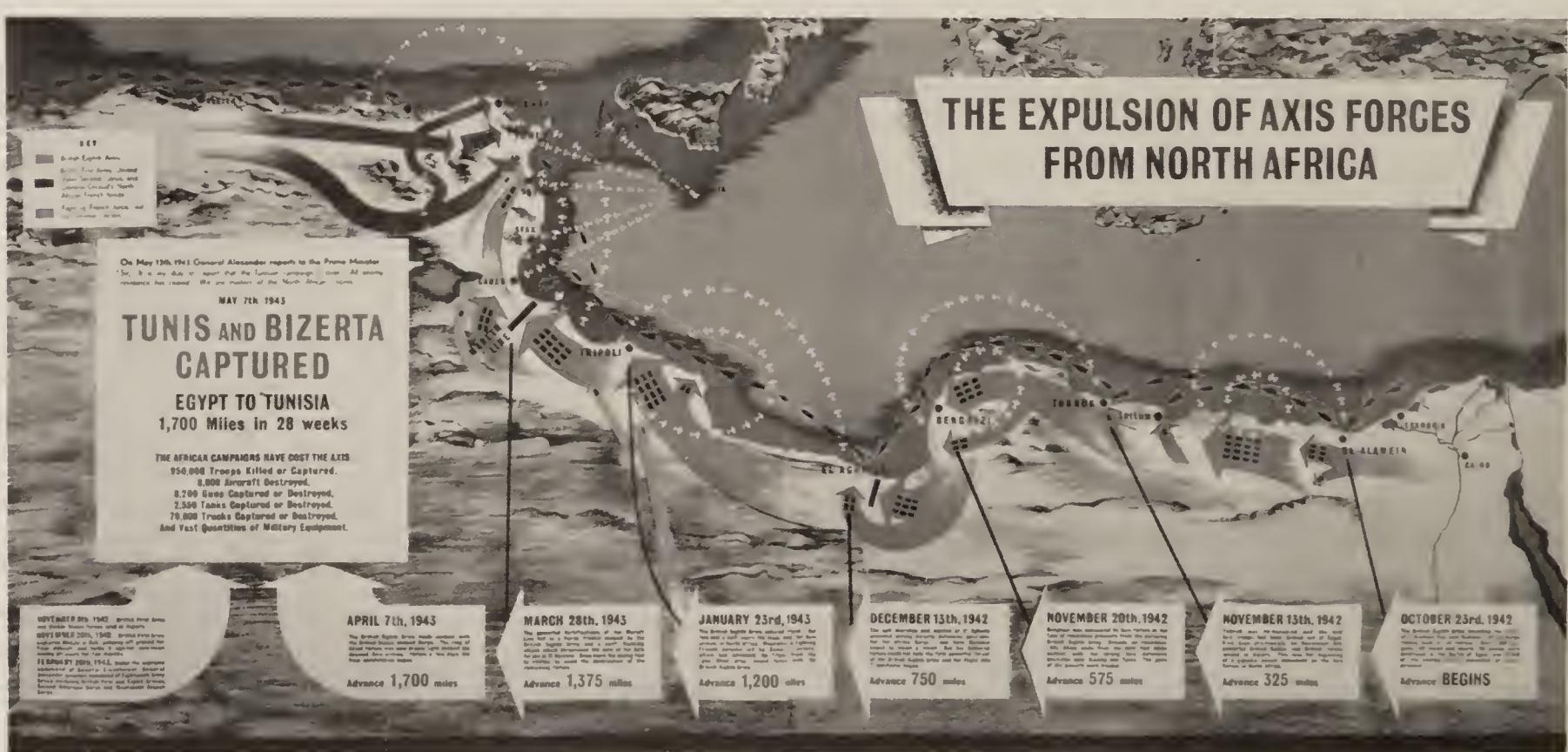
A week after the German invasion of Denmark and Norway, Inchcape displayed in the British Propaganda Bureau window a map of the Scandinavian countries with the loss of German destroyers at Narvik restrainedly marked in blue. In time came the landings of British troops at Namsos and Andalesnes.

In the window opposite, the red arrows of Germany thrust the Norwegians back and back. One day the Allies announced an advance, another the Germans announced an Allied retreat. Merely a strategic retreat, said the British News Service. The Germans, advancing up the Gudbranstal, claimed they had joined up with their Trondheim forces. The British admitted a short withdrawal.

Early morning passers-by, lured by these first remote moves in the war, crossed the road to compare window with window; but it was the blatant menace of the giant red arrows that held the crowd.

From Olivia Manning, *The Balkan Trilogy*, vol.1: *The Great Fortune* (New York: Penguin, 1981), pp. 240, 244.

(Contributed by Jim Akerman)



# Recent Publications

*Cartografia de Catalunya: Catàleg general de la Cartoteca de Catalunya* / Anna M. Cassassas and M. Carme Montaner. Barcelona: Institut Cartogràfic de Catalunya, 1992. 436p., illus.; pbk. ISBN 84-393-2154-6 from Institut Cartogràfic de Catalunya, Balmes, 209-211, 08006 Barcelona, Spain.

This catalogue of the maps in the Cartoteca of Catalunya is produced in what has become a distinctively Spanish style; that is to say that each of over one thousand maps is reproduced on a plate about three inches square, and each has a brief accompanying commentary. There are indices for geographical locations, personal names, and subject matter. The result is a volume of which any library could be proud, for it allows a large number of readers to gain a very accurate idea of the nature of the maps held. (D.B.)

*The Mental Discovery of America* / Eviatar Zerubavel. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992. 164p., illus.; hbk. ISBN 0-8135-1897-0, \$30.00; pbk. ISBN 0-8135-1898-9, \$13.95.

The title of this book is misleading; after all, can any discovery not be "mental?" What the author offers, though, is in fact a commentary on the interesting proposition that America was discovered slowly by the Europeans; as he puts it, "The discovery of America was not a single event that took place on a single day. Rather, it was a long process that actually lasted almost three hundred years." This process is accurately described, using a variety of mostly familiar maps. (D.B.)

*Fontes Cartographici Orteliani: das "Theatrum Orbis Terrarum" von Abraham Ortelius und seine Kartenquellen* / Peter H. Meurer. Weinheim: VCH Acta humaniora, 1991. 360p., 79 pl.; hbk. ISBN 0-3-527-17727-2 from VCH Publishers, Suite 909, 220 E. 23rd St., New York, NY 10010-4506.

The central part of this book contains biographies, lists of works, and bibliographies for almost two hundred of the cartographers who contributed in one way or another to various editions of the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* of Abraham Ortelius. It is thus a great compendium of information about European cartography in one of its most innovative periods. Robert Karrow is at the moment putting

the finishing touches to a rather similar volume in English; when these two volumes have both emerged, historians of cartography in early modern Europe will have a pair of remarkable reference tools. (D.B.)

*Maps for Empire: The First 2,000 Numbered War Office Maps* / A. Crispin Jewitt. London: The British Library, 1992. 511p., illus.; hbk. ISBN 0-7123-0272-7, £75 from the British Library, Marketing and Publishing, 41 Russell Square, London WC1B 3DG, England, UK.

This catalogue concerns a significant portion of the "third leg" (along with the Hydrographic Office and the Ordnance Survey) of official British cartography, the output of the War Office. This is largely cartography for general and military intelligence, and for reasons of secrecy and the resultant lack of documentation no comprehensive published catalogue had been attempted until now. The institutions that became the current Geographical Section, General Staff have maintained throughout a sequential numbering system for their maps that has given this work its organizational logic. The numbering hides, however, a great variety of cartography, including topographic series, triangulation nets, boundary surveys and treaty maps, and maps including in official military and state reports. The first 2000 numbers cover the period 1881-1904. Not surprisingly, the largest body of material relates to African and Asian affairs, but the list as a whole reads like a geographical roll call of British Imperial interests in that age of high imperialism. The handsome volume has several fine indexes to help guide the reader through this profusion. (J.A.)

*The World Map Directory, 1992-1993: A Practical Guide to U.S. & International Maps* / Maizlish, Aaron, and William Tefft. Santa Barbara, CA: Map Link, 1992. 335p.; pbk. ISBN 0-929591-06-9, \$29.95 from Map Link, 25 E. Mason St., Santa Barbara, CA 93101.

This "directory" is in actuality the catalogue for Maplink, a private concern that has, within a very few years, become perhaps the leading independent distributor of internationally published maps in this country. This commercial motivation acknowledged, this book may be the handiest guide yet published to the world's output of topographic maps, thematic maps, and travellers' maps. The listing of commercial publications is restricted to firms with

which Maplink has a relationship, but this weakness is outweighed by the useful summaries of state-sponsored cartography of so many third-world countries. No large map collection should be without a copy, and international travellers will want to consult one well in advance of their journeys. (J.A.)

*Recollections of the American Congress on Surveying and Mapping, 1941-1991*/Walter S. Dix. Jane R. Kennedy, ed. [Bethesda, Md.]: American Congress on Surveying and Mapping, 1991. 94p.; pbk. ISBN 0-9613459-8-5, from ACSM, 5410 Grosvenor Lane, Bethesda, MD 20814.

*Matching the Map Projection to the Need*. Bethesda, Md.: American Congress on Surveying and Mapping/American Cartographic Association, 1991. Special Publication no. 3. 30p.; pbk. ISBN 0-9613459-5-0, from ACSM, 5410 Grosvenor Lane, Bethesda, MD 20814.

Of these two publications of the ACSM, *Matching the Map Projection to the Need* will be the more valuable to most map enthusiasts and professionals. Though surveys of map projections of this type are available in abundance, this one stands out as a hands-on manual for the uninitiated map user, who cares little about academic typologies and mathematical formulas. Instead of talking about conformal or equal area, conic or cylindrical each in their turn, pamphlet's twelve chapters, written by leading academic cartographers, focus on particular functions or frames of reference. One learns, for example, how to view the world as if from space, what projections are best for navigation and distance measurement, or how to project specific "rings of activity."

Walter Dix's chronology of the ACSM, alas, will not interest a wider audience. It is little more than an abstract of conferences and other institutional events apparently intended for ACSM insiders, but serious scholars of the most recent period of the history of professional cartography and geography may also want to take a peek. (J.A.)

## Calendar

**5 February 1993, 5:00 p.m.**

Michigan State University, Department of Geography: Ananda Abeydeera, "Problems of Transition from Ptolemaic Taprobane Modern Ceylão."

**10 February 1993, 7:00 p.m.**

The Washington Map Society, Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress: John Knoerl (National Park Service): "GIS and the Civil War."

**14 February 1993, 11 a.m.**

The New York Map Society will meet at the New York Transit Museum in Brooklyn for a tour of "Building New York: If Things Had Been Different," a guided tour of urban transit maps from around the world.

**25 February 1993, 5:00 p.m.**

Maps and Society lecture series, The Warburg Institute, Woburn Square, London: Matthew Edney (Department of Geography, SUNY-Binghamton), "Scientific Images and Images of Science: The British Mapping of India, 1750-1850."

**6 March 1993, 11 a.m.**

New York Map Society, Museum of Natural History: Bruce Spring, "Maps from Colonial America."

**25 March 1993, 5:00 p.m.**

Maps and Society lecture series, The Warburg Institute, Woburn Square, London: James Akerman (The Newberry Library), "The Structuring of Political Territory in Early Printed Atlases."

**25 March 1993, 7:00 p.m.**

Washington Map Society, Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress: Alice Hudson (New York Public Library): "Women Map Makers."

**3-9 May 1993**

The 16th meeting of the International Cartographic Association convenes in Cologne. Its theme will be "Maps for Knowledge, Action, and Development." Contact: AKM, Congress Service, Clarastrasse 57, CH-4005 Basel, Switzerland.

**6 May 1993, 5:00 p.m.**

Maps and Society lecture series, The Warburg Institute, Woburn Square, London: W.A.R. Richardson (School of Humanities, Flinders University of South Australia), "Place-name Power: The Creation of Mercator's Southern Continent."

**10-13 September 1993**

The 12th International Symposium of the International Map Collectors Society convenes in Mainz and Bonn, Germany.